

REMARKS

The Final Office Action mailed July 7, 2008, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1 and 3-20 are now pending in this application. Claims 1 and 3-20 stand rejected. Claim 2 had been previously canceled.

The rejection of claims 1 and 3 – 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite is respectfully traversed. The Office Action asserts that it is unclear what the “compare” element is being compared to in independent Claims 1, 9, and 15. Moreover, the Office Action asserts that it is unclear from the feature “answers to respective questions” as to where the questions and answers are coming from in independent Claims 1, 9, and 15. Furthermore, the Office Action asserts that the feature “display at least one suggestion” is unclear as to whether at least one suggestion is displayed , at least one suggest for each category is displayed, or whether at least one suggestion is displayed for each category that a user selects for display in Claim 1, 9, and 15.

In response, Claim 1 has been amended to recite “receive process production capability information data using a computer, wherein the process production capability information includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process,” and “display at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion. Applicants submit that Claim 1, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 3–8 depend from independent Claim 1.

Moreover, Claim 9 has been amended to recite “wherein the information relevant to the capabilities of the process production includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process,” and “displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Applicants submit that Claim 9, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 10–14 depend from independent Claim 9.

Furthermore, Claim 15 has been amended to recite “wherein the information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process,” and “displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.” Applicants submit that Claim 15, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 16 - 20 depend from independent Claim 15.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 112 rejections of Claims 1 and 3 – 20 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1 and 3–20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over US Patent 6,604,084 to Powers et al. (hereinafter referred to as “Powers”) in view of US Patent 6,625,511 to Suzuki et al. (hereinafter referred to as “Suzuki”) is respectfully traversed.

Powers describes an evaluation system (10) that includes a client space (12) that is implemented on a client platform (18), and a server application space (14) and a database space (16) that are implemented on a server platform (20). Using client platform (18), an evaluator obtains a question table (150) that includes a questionnaire regarding a member (180). The user answers questions on question table (150) to evaluate member (180). The performance evaluation system is set up by an enterprise to fit an organizational structure of the enterprise (see Powers, column 5, line 65 to column 6, line 2), and the users are people in the performance evaluation system that perform the evaluation and that carry out various tasks associated with the evaluation process (see Powers, column 6, lines 49-51). Moreover, Powers describes that relative weights are assigned to a question depending on their importance to the enterprise (see Powers, column 9, lines 23-25). Notably, Powers does not describe nor suggest a server configured to receive a per category weighted value assigned by

a user. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes that relative weights are assigned to a question by an enterprise, not a user.

Suzuki describes an evaluation apparatus (10) that includes a workshop evaluating unit (10a) designed for evaluating, through estimation, real abilities of the manufacturing workshops, and a product evaluating unit (10b) for estimating fraction defective upon manufacturing of a product or component parts of the product at a manufacturing workshop. To perform an evaluation using apparatus (10), an evaluator selects an answer alternative (76) for each query item (75). A screen image output is provided that includes workshop improvement points (88a), a short-term measures plan (88b), and a long-term measures plan (88c). Notably, Suzuki does not describe nor suggest a server configured to receive a per category weighted value assigned by a user.

Claim 1 recites a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system comprises “a device . . . a server connected to said device and configured to receive process production capability information data using a computer, from a user via said device, said server further configured to . . . receive process production capability information data using a computer, wherein the process production capability information includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process . . . receive a per category weighted value assigned by the user . . . compile the received information . . . displaying to the user information related to the production process . . . compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, to the reference process that represents the ideal production process, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . display the results of the compared information based on the weighted value assigned by the user to the user via said device wherein the results include a numerical score based on the weighted value assigned by the user representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . display at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

No combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a system for evaluating process performance as is recited in Claim 1. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes nor suggests a server configured to receive a per category weighted value assigned by a user. Rather, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that is set up by an enterprise and that uses relative weights that are assigned to a question by the enterprise. And Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to weighted values assigned by a user. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 3-8 depend from independent Claim 1. When the recitations of Claims 3-8 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 3-8 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 9 recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server. The method comprises “defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user . . . receiving, using the computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories, wherein the information relevant to the capabilities of the process production includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process. . . receiving a per category weighed value assigned by the user . . . compiling the received information . . . comparing the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, to the reference process that represents the ideal production process . . . displaying the results to the user via the device wherein the results include a numerical score based on the weighting value assigned by the user representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the weighted value assigned by the user . . . displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired

manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

No combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process as is recited in Claim 9. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes nor suggests a method for defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of production performance capabilities of at least one of a process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user and a weighting value is assigned by the user. Rather, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that is set up by an enterprise and that uses relative weights that are assigned to a question by the enterprise. And Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to weighted values assigned by a user. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 10-14 depend from independent Claim 9. When the recitations of Claims 10-14 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 9, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 10-14 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 15 recites a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices. The method comprises “receiving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process, wherein the evaluation categories are selected by the users, and wherein the information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process includes a reference process that represents an ideal production process . . . assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to a relative contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information assigned by the user . . . compiling the information received from the users with the server . . . evaluating the received information in the form of answers to respective questions presented to the user, in

comparison to the reference process that represents the ideal production process . . . displaying the results to the users wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the assigned weighted value . . . displaying at least one suggestion for each category of the production process for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

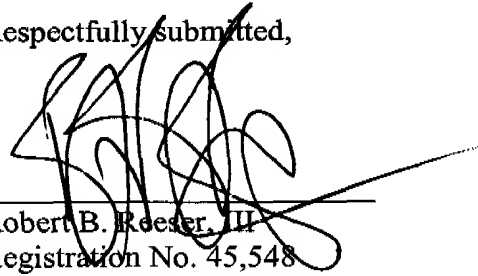
No combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a method for evaluating performance of a production process as is recited in Claim 15. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes nor suggests a method for defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of production performance capabilities of at least one of a process and a part being evaluated, wherein evaluation area categories are selected by a user and a weighting value is assigned by the user. Rather, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that is set up by an enterprise and that uses relative weights that are assigned to a question by the enterprise. And Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to weighted values assigned by a user. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 16-20 depend from independent Claim 15. When the recitations of Claims 16-20 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 16-20 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 103 rejection of Claims 1 and 3-20 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. B. Reeser, III', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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